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# THE MUSIC OF OLYMPUS

ANDREW BARKER

## ABSTRACT

The semi-legendary Phrygian aulete and composer Olympus figures prominently in the Plutarchan *De musica*. This paper considers what we are told about the whole corpus of compositions which, according to the writer's sources, were those of Olympus. I shall not treat these reports as reliable evidence about music from the period of Olympus, but as evidence about the music that was believed to be his by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-century sources on which the Plutarchan writer drew. Other sources show that music attributed to Olympus was still performed and well known in Greece in those centuries. The final part of the paper comments on some of the other reports we have about Olympus' music from this period (principally from Plato and Aristotle), and offers a hypothesis about which of the compositions mentioned in the *De musica* are likely to have been the ones that attracted these writers' attention.

THE Phrygian aulete Olympus is one of the heroes of the *De musica*; he is treated as the musician who introduced the art of the *aulos* into Greece (4, 1132f), and originated the 'noble music' that is characteristically Greek (11, 1135b). The passages about him which musical specialists know best are the detailed account of the *spondeion* in chapter 11, and the companion-piece in chapter 19 describing aspects of the *spondeiazon* or *spondeiakos tropos*; these have been carefully studied many times, and I shall not re-examine all the details here.<sup>1</sup> My project is more general. The *De musica* credits Olympus with several other kinds of composition too, and it identifies some of the rhythms and other musical resources on which they were based. I want, then, to review the evidence that this text provides about the profile of his entire oeuvre, and to relate it to information recorded in certain other Greek writings, to see if we can construct a picture of his work as a whole.

I shall not assume that our texts give us reliable evidence about music composed by an individual called Olympus in the seventh century BC or thereabouts. The major sources on which the *De musica* draws are writings of the fifth and fourth centuries, and we cannot be sure that the oral tradition which they inherited had preserved details of musical compositions and practices unchanged over a period of two or three hundred years.<sup>2</sup> But I

<sup>1</sup> For detailed discussion of both passages see Winnington-Ingram 1928; Barker 1984, pp. 216-218, 255-257; West 1992, pp. 163-164; Barker 2002, pp. 31-40; Hagel 2010, pp. 397-413.

<sup>2</sup> Most scholars have taken the fourth-century reports as reliable evidence about archaic music, and to some extent this approach is defensible, since (as Professor Carl Huffman

shall argue that our principal reports come from writers who based their conclusions on their own first-hand experience of the music. They had listened attentively to compositions in an archaic style which were said to be those of Olympus, and they were recording features of the music they heard; we know from several other sources – notably Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle – that pieces attributed to Olympus were still well known in the classical period. What I shall be attempting to reconstruct, then, is the overall profile of the music to which Olympus' name was attached in the fifth and fourth centuries. As a part of that attempt, I shall try to make what sense I can of the relation between the relatively technical information provided in the *De musica* and the more impressionistic depictions that we find especially in Plato and Aristotle.

There is one preliminary complication that I want to eliminate. A few authors assert that there were two different musicians named Olympus. One was said to be a pupil of Marsyas, and clearly belongs to the world of legend. The other, Olympus the Younger, is located in a genuinely historical period; according to the *Suda* he lived in the time of Midas son of Gordius, that is, around the beginning of the seventh century. The earliest writer to draw the distinction was the fifth-century poet Pratinas, cited at *De mus.* 7, 1133e. But I do not think this notion should be taken seriously. Olympus seems to have started out as a figure in myths which linked him with the satyr Marsyas. But educated people in the classical period realised that legends involving satyrs and supernatural beings should not be treated as historical, and hence that the Olympus associated with Marsyas could not be the composer of the melodies that they themselves heard. Olympus the Younger, I think, is simply a device through which the actual composer could be identified and brought into the sphere of history.<sup>1</sup> For present purposes, at any rate, I shall ignore the distinction.

Olympus is mentioned in nine separate passages of the *De musica*. We can ignore one of them, the report by Alexander Polyhistor at 4, 1132f, since Alexander belongs to the first century, not the fifth or the fourth, and what he says is in any case vague. It would be unhelpful to discuss the information provided by the other passages in the rather chaotic order in which it appears in the text. I shall try to organise it in a more intelligible way, be-

has pointed out to me) they are based on the same process of oral transmission that preserved the words of archaic poetry. The main outlines of the melodies may indeed have passed down the centuries unaltered. But we may suspect that some of the musical details, such as the tiny nuances of tuning mentioned in the account of Olympus' *spondeion*, or the conventions of accompaniment described in the passage on the *spondeiaxon tropos*, were more susceptible to changes in performing practice than the words of a poem.

<sup>1</sup> For a rather similar hypothesis see West 1992, pp. 330–331.

ginning with a list of the compositions or types of composition attributed to Olympus.

The text describes five of them explicitly as *nomoi* and gives them their specific names, as well as remarking that he brought to Greece the enharmonic *nomoi* which the Greeks now use in their festivals (5, 1133e): they are the *Polykephalos nomos* (6, 1133d-7, 1133E), the *Harmatios nomos* (7, 1133e-f), probably the *Orthios nomos* (though only by implication, 7, 1133f), the *nomos of Ares* (28, 1141b) and the *nomos of Athena* (33, 1143b-c). In addition to these there is the *spondeion* (11, 1134f-1135b), *Metroia* and 'other Phrygian compositions' (19, 1137d), and the *epikedeion* for the Python (15, 1136c), which may be identical with the *Polykephalos nomos*. Olympus is not explicitly credited with compositions in the *spondeiazon tropos* (18, 1137b-19, 1137d); but even if he was not thought to have composed such pieces, they nevertheless have some bearing on this enquiry.<sup>1</sup>

Various ingredients of the compositions are also mentioned. On the level of harmonic structure, there are references to the Dorian, Lydian and Phrygian systems (Dorian in the *spondeion*, Lydian in the lament for the Python and Phrygian in the *Metroia* and other unspecified pieces). We are also told about the form of enharmonic involved in the *spondeion*, which probably motivates the later description of Olympus' compositions as *τρίχορδα* (18, 1137a-b); the rather different system of the *spondeiazon tropos* and the relations between notes in its melody and in its accompaniment; the use of additional notes in the Phrygian pieces; and the absence of the tetrachord *hypaton* from the Dorian compositions, though not elsewhere. Turning next to rhythms, we find the pattern described as the *κατὰ δάκτυλον εἶδος*, associated with the *Harmatios nomos* (according to 'some people' it was borrowed from the *Orthios nomos*, and according to Glaukos it was later 'imitated' by Stesichorus); there are allusions to cretics and paeonic rhythms (taken over from Olympus by Thaletas), and specifically the *paion epibatos* with its modulation into trochaic rhythm in the *nomos of Athena*; prosodiacs in the *nomos of Ares*, the choreios in the *Metroia* and the bacchius in unspecified compositions; and we can presumably add a largely spondaic system as the rhythm of the *spondeion*.

All in all, this amounts to a substantial body of information, though of course we would like to know much more about the compositions. I shall try to assemble such details as we have a little later, but first we must ask

<sup>1</sup> This style of composition is attributed to Olympus' followers and clearly belongs to the same tradition as the *spondeion*. But we are told at 11, 1135b that he did not divide the half-tone into the pair of quarter-tones comprising the enharmonic *pyknon*, which does appear in the scale of the *spondeiazon tropos*. The writer seems to think that this innovation came rather later, perhaps in the next generation after Olympus himself.

where all this information comes from and how confidently we can rely on its accuracy. If we put aside the vague report attributed to Alexander Polyhistor, eight passages remain, of which I shall divide the first into two. No authority is named for the statement at 6, 1133d that Olympus composed the *Polykephalos nomos*; it seems certain that the compiler's immediate source was Heraclides, but we are not told where Heraclides found his evidence.<sup>1</sup> In the second part of the passage, however, 7, 1133e-f, the source who attributes to Olympus the *Harmatios nomos*, the *κατὰ δάκτυλον εἶδος* and probably the *Orthios nomos* is identified as Glaukos, that is, Glaukos of Rhegium, around the end of the fifth century. Glaukos is also responsible for the allusion to paeonic and cretic rhythms at 10, 1134e. All six of the remaining passages can confidently be assigned to Aristoxenus, together with the *mousikoi* to whom he attributes the reconstruction of the invention of the earliest form of the enharmonic, employed in the *spondeion*.

We cannot be sure about the basis of Heraclides' report about the *Polykephalos nomos*, though it must have been one of the compositions regularly attributed to Olympus in the fourth century. But the others rest on solid authority. This is not just because both Glaukos and Aristoxenus were experienced musicians, and are in general figures whose opinions we should treat with respect. The crucial point is that their comments were evidently based on their own analyses of music they actually heard, or on analyses provided by other competent experts who had heard it. Glaukos' statements about the melodic and rhythmic contents of Olympus' music, and their relations with those used by other composers such as Stesichorus and Thaletas, cannot possibly have been derived just from allusions in earlier poems or inscriptions, as some of Heraclides contentions apparently were. They must have been based on direct experience of the music itself.<sup>2</sup> The same is even more obviously true of the Aristoxenian analyses of the *spondeion*, the *spondeiazon tropos* and the *nomos of Athena*, and again of the slighter remarks about the *Metroia* and the other Phrygian compositions. Much of the passage on the *spondeion* is due to Aristoxenus himself, rather than to the *mousikoi* whom he mentions at the beginning; but even they, I think, are likely to have been expert witnesses. They are not named, but are clearly people who have some competence in harmonic analysis. They are certainly not the *harmonikoi* who appear in the pages of the *Elementa harmonica*, since Aristoxenus treats those people with such contempt that it is unbelievable that he would have cited them as authorities. My own guess is that they were not authors whose books he had read, but professional musicians whom he

<sup>1</sup> On the use made of Heraclides' work in the *De musica*, and on his methods as a historian of music, see Barker 2009, pp. 273-298.

<sup>2</sup> Glaukos' work is discussed in more detail in Barker 2007, pp. 84-86.

knew personally, and with whom he talked about these matters; this cannot be proved, of course, but it seems to fit the facts.

I said that the *spondeion* and the *spondeiazon tropos* are not my main focus here, but they are important, and we need to review some of the information about them in the *De musica*. The similarity of their names suggests that they must be related to one another, and so they are; but there are differences too. So far as we can tell, the *spondeion* itself used only five notes. From *hypate* at the bottom its scale rises through a semitone to the pitch of diatonic *parhypate* or enharmonic *lichanos meson*, then through a ditone to *mese*, a tone to *paramese*, and through the interval of three quarters of a tone, the 'higher *spondeiasmos*', to an unnamed note at the top.<sup>1</sup> To put it another way, at the bottom there is a tetrachord with one note missing; according to our text it is an enharmonic tetrachord with an undivided semitone. Then comes a tone of disjunction, and finally we have the three-quarter-tone *spondeiasmos*.

The *spondeiazon tropos* is more complex. The notes in its melody which are mentioned in chapter 19 are *parhypate*, *lichanos*, *mese*, *paramese*, and *paranete*; the context makes it clear that the *paranete* is *paranete diezeugmenon*, and that all these notes are to be construed as enharmonic. We are also told that it did not use *trite* or either of the *netai*. The list of the notes it included is not necessarily complete,<sup>2</sup> and it seems reasonable to assume that it incorporated *hypate meson* at the bottom. In that case its lower part was a complete enharmonic tetrachord; then came the tone of disjunction, and the final step upwards was a semitone. This places it in an intelligible relation to the *spondeion*. The lower tetrachord has been completed by the insertion of enharmonic *parhypate*, and the unusual three-quarter-tone at the top has been reduced to a more normal semitone. The fact that the top note is called *paranete* shows that another note, *trite*, is conceived as being omitted from this semitone gap, which makes the semitone analogous, in an incomplete upper tetrachord, to the *spondeion*'s undivided semitone in the lower.

So much for the scale of the melody, but there is also the accompaniment. We can assume that it included all the notes employed in the melody, but we are told that it used other notes as well, specifically *trite* (which must be *trite diezeugmenon*), *nete diezeugmenon* and *nete synemmenon*. If we ignore *nete synemmenon* for a moment, this means that it formed a complete enharmonic octave. The main conclusion we have to draw, then, is that when the melody and the accompaniment were put together, the resulting complex was an enharmonic melody spanning only the range of a minor sixth, with

<sup>1</sup> Aristides Quintilianus (*De mus.* 28, 1-7) gives this three-quarter-tone interval the name *spondeiasmos* when it is ascending, *eklysis* when it descends.

<sup>2</sup> The writer is not aiming at a complete catalogue; he is interested only in the notes whose pitches differed from those that accompanied them.

an undivided semitone at the top, set to an accompaniment based on a regularly formed enharmonic system spanning an octave.

This seems straightforward, but there are two oddities. One is that we would expect something called the *spondeiazon tropos* to make use of the rising interval called *spondeiasmos*, and yet there is nowhere it can occur; no pair of notes separated by three quarters of a tone can be found anywhere in the system. Secondly, the inclusion of *nete synemmenon* in the accompaniment might tempt us to suppose that this *tropos* admitted a rudimentary kind of modulation, the modulation between disjunct and conjunct systems which later became common. But this cannot be correct, for at least three reasons. First, this note does not occur where one would naturally expect it in a modulation, that is, in the melody. Secondly, there is no suggestion that any other notes in the conjunct tetrachord were used,<sup>1</sup> and a pattern using *nete synemmenon* in an environment whose only other notes belong to the enharmonic tetrachord *diezeugmenon* can hardly be reckoned a modulation at all, besides being thoroughly eccentric. Thirdly and most significantly, the writer names the melodic notes which were played together with those of the accompaniment, and tells us whether the result is concordant or discordant. *Nete synemmenon* is said to have been used in the accompaniment together with three different melodic notes, and in each case the combination forms a discord. This must imply that it was used only to emphasise moments of tension that demanded resolution,<sup>2</sup> and cannot have been treated as one of the 'fixed' notes of the system, in tandem with which the melody could come even temporarily to rest. All it has in common with *nete synemmenon* as we meet it elsewhere is its pitch. It seems to lack any connection with the system that made it theoretically intelligible, and from that perspective it seems altogether anomalous. It is no surprise when we are told that anyone who used it in a melody in the *spondeiazon tropos* would have been ashamed of the resulting *ethos*.

Now the complex of melody and accompaniment we have been examining is not described as a composition but as a *tropos*, which I take to mean something like a 'manner' or 'style'. It provides a general pattern, a set of rules and conventions within which a composer can go to work; and it could

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Athena Katsanevaki for pointing out a stupid mistake in Barker 1984, p. 257, where I say that the notes A, B, D (*mese*, *paramese*, *nete synemmenon*), all of which are mentioned in the passage, form an imperfect version of the enharmonic tetrachord A, A+, B, D. But of course this is nonsense. B (*paramese*) has no place in such a tetrachord; the correct series would be A, A+, A#, D, and the notes assigned by our text to the *spondeiazon tropos* includes neither A+ nor A#.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. [Aristot.] *Probl.* 19, 39 (921a), which uses the words 'pain' and 'pleasure' to evoke what we would call the 'tension' and 'resolution' caused by different relations between a melody and its accompaniment.

form the basis of any number of individual compositions. We may be reminded of Aristoxenus' remarks about people listening to pieces played in 'the first and second of the ancient *tropoi*' (*El. harm.* 23, 9-11).<sup>1</sup> We should therefore bear in mind the possibility that compositions attributed to Olympus elsewhere in the *De musica* – some of his *nomoi*, for example – may have had some features of this style, even if the semitone in the scale they used remained undivided (see n. 4 above).

The passage describing the *spondeiazon tropos* goes on immediately to mention other kinds of music produced by Olympus and "those who followed him". The details are scanty, but they are enough to show that pieces of these sorts did not conform to the same restrictions. In their *Metroia* and in their other Phrygian compositions, we are told, they used *nete synemmenon* in the melody as well as the accompaniment – evidently without detriment to the relevant *ethos* – and in all except their Dorian compositions they also made use of the tetrachord *hypaton*. In its context, this gives us another piece of information about the *spondeiazon tropos*; like the *spondeion* scale described in chapter 11, it was classified as Dorian. It is worth noting also the remark at the end of chapter 19. Olympus and his followers avoided the lower tetrachord in their Dorian compositions in order to preserve the appropriate *ēthos* and to respect τὸ καλὸν αὐτοῦ, where the word καλὸν evokes a particularly noble, austere kind of beauty, as also at 1135b and again at *El. harm.* 23, 4-6. The melodic scale of the *spondeiazon tropos* is different from that of the *spondeion*, and it involved quite an elaborate scheme of heterophonic accompaniment, but it seems that their aesthetic qualities were of much the same sort. We can also infer that whatever the character of Olympus' non-Dorian compositions may have been, they lacked this particular kind of lofty nobility. Hence when we consider other writers' reactions to the music of Olympus, we should not automatically assume that they are talking about pieces with the aesthetic characteristics which Aristoxenus admired in the *spondeion*. I shall suggest that there are good reasons for thinking that they are not.

Let us now turn briefly to the other kinds of composition mentioned in chapter 19, the *Metroia* and the "other Phrygian pieces". *Metroia* are performances in honour of the Mother Goddess, often identified with the Phrygian goddess Cybele, and we know from other sources that the music of these rituals was associated with vigorous dancing, and gripped the participants with ecstatic *enthousiasmos*, comparable to that of Bacchantes in

<sup>1</sup> I have suggested elsewhere (Barker 2007, p. 297) that these two *tropoi* might be the *spondeion* and the *spondeiazon tropos* themselves, but Stefan Hagel has recently raised powerful objections to this hypothesis. For his very detailed discussion of the problems raised by this passage see Hagel 2010, pp. 414-429; and see p. 424 for his explicit rejection of my suggestion.



the rituals of Dionysus. The agent primarily responsible for its remarkable powers was the rhythmic beating of percussion instruments, especially *kymbala* and *tympana*, together with the sonorous booming of the Phrygian *aulos*. The *De musica* tells us that the main rhythmic component of Olympus' *Metroia* was the choreios, and this seems to fit the picture well; the word is applied to several different metrical forms, but it unambiguously refers to a dancing rhythm, one suited to *choreia*. Phrygian music in general, as Aristotle points out in the *Politics*, has a particular affinity with the *aulos*, and both induce *enthousiasmos* and emotion (*Pol.* 1342b). It is thus at the opposite end of the musical spectrum from the Dorian, and the *Metroia* credited to Olympus in the fourth century must have been far removed in character from the solemn austerity of the *spondeion*. Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes the point explicitly when he is contrasting the styles of Demosthenes and Isocrates, and his own reactions to them (*Dem.* 21, 4-22, 3). When he reads a speech by Isocrates, he says, he becomes serious and responsible in character (*ta ethe spoudaios*), and intellectually steadfast, just like people who listen to *spondeia aulemata* or Dorian and enharmonic melodies. When he reads a speech of Demosthenes, on the other hand, he experiences a whirlwind of all the emotions that can overpower the human mind, just as people who are being initiated in the *Metroia* or in Corybantic rituals are stirred up by the sounds and other influences at work in these ceremonies. Dionysius is trying to convey the difference between Demosthenes' and Isocrates' styles in the strongest possible terms, and has picked out the contrasting effects of *spondeia* and *Metroia* as their clearest musical counterparts. It seems then that the music attributed to Olympus by no means always exuded an atmosphere of grave solemnity. Pieces designed for the ritual contexts in which *Metroia* were performed must have been capable of infecting their hearers with passionate excitement and inducing unrestrained religious ecstasy.

When considering the *nomoi* attributed to Olympus, the first question we need to ask is what is meant by calling these pieces *nomoi*. In the later fifth century and the fourth, the word was used primarily of the elaborate and colourful compositions performed by soloists competing in the great festivals, for instance at Delphi. But pieces whose style was sufficiently archaic for them to be thought of as works of Olympus cannot have been played in such contexts in this period. The competitions were the preserve of virtuosi, performing in the most up-to-date manner with intricate modulations and highly dramatic effects. At *De mus.* 21, 1138a, for instance, we hear of the conservative aulete Telephanes, who effectively disqualified himself from competing in the Pythian festival because he refused to play an *aulos* equipped with the device called the *syrix*, which was essential in any adequate interpretation of the *Pythikos nomos* (it gave the player access to the higher har-

monics, and made it possible to give a convincing musical rendering of the whistling hisses of the dying monster killed by Apollo).<sup>1</sup> But the competitive festivals were religious occasions too, and many other ceremonies took place in addition to the contests. As is often the case with religious observances, their form and content were probably much less vulnerable than the public competitions to the musical fashions of the moment. It is in these and in other such religious settings, I suggest, that we should expect Olympus' time-honoured *nomoi* to have been performed, as parts of rituals whose traditions had been preserved for longer than anyone could remember.

We should also bear in mind that when the name of a *nomos* is mentioned it is not necessarily the name of a particular individual composition. Our evidence on this point is hazy, but we can be sure that when auletes like Antigeneidas and Ismenias played the *Pythikos nomos* at Delphi,<sup>2</sup> they were not simply reproducing pieces that had been composed many years before. They played their own new compositions, within broad guidelines to which each named *nomos* had to conform in the environment of a particular festival; the purpose of the *Pythikos nomos*, for example, was to depict the battle of Apollo with the Python, and it was expected to divide it up into a specific sequence of episodes. Olympus' *nomoi* may therefore have been quite unlike any similarly named *nomoi* that were played in competitions in classical times.

The only *nomos* attributed to Olympus of which we have much clear information is the *nomos* of Athena. According to a passage almost certainly derived from Aristoxenus, in chapter 33 of the *De musica* (33, 1143b-c), it was in the enharmonic genus and the Phrygian *tonos*; the rhythms of its opening section were based on the slow, five-beat movement called the *paion epibatatos*, modulating subtly into a trochaic pattern; and though the structural foundations of another section, known as the *harmonia*, were still just the same, the composer's skilful use of his resources made its *ethos* entirely different from that of the introduction. Aristoxenus' main purpose is in fact to demonstrate that the *ethos* of a composition or any of its parts does not depend directly on its harmonic and rhythmic structures, but on the particular way in which the composer exploits them. One of the things he admired in the archaic style of music was its composers' capacity to create and transform a musical atmosphere at will, without all the artificial techniques, dramatic effects and elaborate modulations on which later musicians depended for such purposes.

The passage shows that the *nomos* of Athena was in at least two sections or movements, the introduction and the so-called *harmonia*, and probably

<sup>1</sup> Poll. *Onom.* 4, 84; Strabo, *Geog.* 9, 3, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Him. *Or.* 74, 2 (Antigeneidas), 39, 3 (Ismenias).

there was at least one other, some sort of concluding finale. But there may have been more. The only rhythms involved in the two movements mentioned in chapter 33 are the *paion epibatos* and the trochaic system into which it modulated. At 7, 1133e-f, however, we learn that Glaukos also attributed the *Harmatios nomos* to Olympus, and a scholiast on Euripides identifies this with the *nomos* of Athena.<sup>1</sup> Martin West has argued that his evidence should be taken seriously,<sup>2</sup> and for the present I shall assume that he was right. Glaukos associates the *Harmatios nomos* with a rhythm he calls the *κατὰ δάκτυλον εἶδος*; and since Stesichorus is said to have adopted this scheme, West very plausibly identifies it with the uneven dactylo-epitrite pattern known from Stesichorus' surviving works. He explains its connection with the name *Harmatios nomos*, the 'Chariot nome', by describing such lines as "bucketing along, not quite evenly, bumping to a halt at the end of a long run" (p. 311), linking the name also with the motif of the 'chariot of song' found for instance at Pind. *Ol.* 6, 22 and Bacchyl. 5, 176, both of which occur in dactylo-epitrite contexts.

If all these hypotheses are correct, the *nomos* of Athena must have included a sufficiently extensive passage in dactylo-epitrites for this rhythm to have been one of its characteristic features, and for it to have attracted the alternative name *Harmatios*. In that case there must have been more movements than are mentioned in chapter 19, since their rhythms are of a different sort; and the 'bucketing, bumping' rhythms of this additional material will surely have gone hand in hand with another variation in *ethos*. We can add one more detail to support that contention. In another remark which West treats as reliable, the scholiast tells us that the *Harmatios nomos* was performed at a high pitch; and this is likely enough, given the context of the allusion in Euripides, which is a Phrygian's wild, almost hysterical lament on the fall of Troy. This may explain the statement at *De musica* 7, 1133f that according to some people the *κατὰ δάκτυλον εἶδος* was taken from the *Orthios nomos*, since the title of this *nomos* probably refers to its characteristically high pitch. Then if the scholiast's statements are trustworthy, my suggestion that Olympus' *nomos* was even more variable in *ethos* than chapter 19 indicates will gain further support. The *ethos* of a bucketing dactylo-epitrite movement played at the top of the range even of an archaic *aulos* must have differed markedly from that of the stately paeonic section at the beginning.

Two other *nomoi* are attributed to Olympus in the *De musica*, the *nomos* of Ares and the *Polykephalos nomos*. All we can say of the first is that it was presumably war-like in character and was probably one of the Dorian compositions; apart from the statement at 28, 1141b that it was in prosodiac rhythm, which might mean any of several things, we have no information

<sup>1</sup> Schol. Eur. *Or.* 1384.

<sup>2</sup> West 1971, p. 310.

about it at all. The *Polykephalos nomos* is the piece with which the aulete Midas of Akragas won a victory at the Pythian festival in 486 BC, celebrated in Pindar's twelfth *Pythian*. There it is described, in a rather enigmatic phrase, as a *πάμφωνον μέλος*, an "every-voiced melody", meaning perhaps that it used notes in every register, or that it was strongly mimetic, imitating sounds of every sort. The latter may be more likely, since we are told that it was devised by Athena to imitate the terrifying lament of the Gorgons when Perseus killed their sister Medusa. The scholiasts give several explanations of its name, of which the most plausible is that it refers to the many heads of the snakes that served the Gorgons instead of hair. It seems clear that it was a dramatic and colourful work, and that at least part of it was cast in the form of a passionate lament.

Pindar goes on to say that Athena handed it on to mortal humans to play at their competitive festivals, which may explain the otherwise rather puzzling remark in the *De musica*, that Olympus had composed it in honour of the god Apollo (6, 1133d). Apollo has nothing to do with the story of Perseus and the Gorgons, but it was at his Delphic festival that Midas won his contest, and it was therefore a contribution to Apollo's cult. The auletic piece we hear of most often in this context is of course the *Pythikos nomos*, which the *De musica* does not explicitly attribute to Olympus; but it does say – citing Aristoxenus as its authority – that he was the first person to compose a 'lament for the Python', and that it was in the Lydian *harmonia* (15, 1136c). This may have been identical with the *Pythikos nomos*, or perhaps it was no more than a lament, a simpler precursor of the well known compositions which depicted the whole story. Olympus is associated with laments in the opening lines of Aristophanes' *Knights*, and again by Pollux, who says that he composed *nomoi epitymbidion*, pieces to be played at a dead person's tomb (4, 78).

Little more can be extracted from the *De musica* about the musical features of the works credited to Olympus. The only ingredient which it mentions and I have not discussed is the rhythmic unit called the *bacchius* (28, 1141b), and we cannot infer much from that; the name refers to various rhythmic patterns, and our text does not connect it with any particular group of Olympus' compositions. One general conclusion we can draw with moderate confidence is that all the melodies associated with the 'Olympus tradition' were based on a scale-system that was recognised as enharmonic, whether its semitones were undivided, as in the *spondeion*, or broken into quarter-tones as in the *spondeiazon tropos* and the related genres mentioned in chapter 19; and they probably included little or no melodic modulation. But our cursory review of the evidence has shown that the works to which Olympus' name was attached in the fifth and fourth centuries were remarkably diverse. They included Dorian, Phrygian and Lydi-

an compositions, *spondeia*, *Metroia*, laments and a considerable number of *nomoi*, and a wide range of different rhythmic structures; and there were substantial differences between the aesthetic impressions that the various kinds of piece created, the types of *ethos* associated with them and the emotional impacts they made on their listeners.

This point leads on to the last question that I want to ask. Olympus' music was treated as a living presence by fifth and fourth-century authors other than those represented in the pages of the *De musica*. I have mentioned Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle; we can add Euripides, at *IA* 573-578, and Telestes in a fragment quoted at Athenaeus 617b (*PMG* 806). I shall say something in a moment about one other passage, which does not mention Olympus but is nevertheless relevant. Neither Telestes nor Euripides tells us much. The lines of Euripides suggest that Olympus' melodies could be played in a pastoral context for mere amusement. Telestes does not refer to Olympus by name, but his 'Phrygian king of the beautifully-breathing holy *auloi*' can hardly be anyone else; the substance of his statement is that this 'king' was the first to use the Lydian *harmonia*, as a 'rival' or 'counterbalance' to the Dorian. This may indicate that Olympus' Lydian compositions were more prominent features of his oeuvre than we would have guessed from the *De musica*, and it confirms the impression we get from other sources that the characters of Dorian and Lydian melodies were very different.<sup>1</sup>

The remarks in Plato and Aristotle are interesting in another way. They do not focus on the form and structure of Olympus' music but on the ways in which it impressed itself its hearers and affected their emotional condition; and the question I want to raise is whether they are talking about Olympus' work in general, or are referring to only one aspect of it, and if so which. I have already drawn attention to Aristotle's comment at *Pol.* 1340a about the *enthousiasmos* which this music inspires in its hearers. Plato's allusions are at *Symposium* 215b-c and *Minos* 318b. (Whether the *Minos* is really by Plato or not, it is generally agreed to be a fourth-century product; and in any case we need give it no special attention, since it is obviously based on the *Symposium* and does little more than to repeat what the other text says.)

The *Symposium* passage is the beginning of Alcibiades' long, drunken speech about Socrates, containing his famous comparison of Socrates' conversation with the pipe-playing of Marsyas. Alcibiades needs the reference to Marsyas to introduce the image of the satyr, which he exploits in several ways; but he tells us that the melodies he has in mind are those usually attributed to Olympus. "Even now", he says, "whoever plays his [Marsyas'] melodies on the *auloi* – since I say that the pieces which Olympus played are

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Plat. *Resp.* 398e-399c; Aristot. *Pol.* 1342a-b.

those of Marsyas, who taught him – whether it is a good aulete or a miserable *auletris*, they alone hold people spellbound, and reveal those who are in need of the gods and of the rites of initiation, since they are divine” (215c). The only substantial differences between this and the passage in the *Minos* are that in the latter dialogue the statements are put into the mouth of a sober Socrates rather than an inebriated Alcibiades, and that there is a stronger emphasis on the thesis that it is only the *aulesmata* of Marsyas and Olympus that possess these remarkable powers.

At a general level, these two texts seem to reflect much the same impressions as Aristotle’s statement that the melodies of Olympus put their hearers into a state of *enthousiasmos*; but they have another intriguing implication as well. They suggest that these melodies do not affect everyone in the same way, since they possess and ‘reveal’ only those who are “in need of the gods and of the rites of initiation (τελεταί)”. Something happens to these people, and not to others, when Olympus’ music is played. This does not seem to be a notion peculiar to Plato. It reappears, in a slightly different form, in a fragment of Menander’s *Theophoroumene*.<sup>1</sup> A girl is claiming to be possessed with divinely inspired madness, but one of the characters, probably her father, thinks she is merely pretending. A second character, Kleinias, disagrees: “You’re talking nonsense”, he says to his companion. “No, Lysias, she isn’t pretending”; and Lysias replies: “There’s a test we can apply; and if she is really possessed by a divinity she’ll come leaping out here in front of us. [To the aulete.] Play the Mother of the Gods’ music on the *auloi*, or better still, the music of the Korybantes. [To Kleinias.] Stand over here by me, by the doors of the inn”.<sup>2</sup>

The cunning plan is that if the girl is really possessed, she won’t be able to resist the call of this music on the *auloi*; and presumably if she isn’t, she will not react at all. (So far as we can tell from the other remains of the play, the girl is too smart to be caught like that. She is in fact pretending, but she nevertheless comes bounding out, dancing and chanting a splendid jumble of a song in honour of Cybele; it contains at least fifteen evocations of its Cybelean and Korybantic environment in twenty short and incomplete papyrus lines). The ‘test’ that Kleinias and Lysias propose has clear affinities with what Plato tells us; only those who are, as he puts it, ‘in need of the god’ will respond to the music with compulsive singing and dancing. The main difference is that Menander’s characters do not specify the music as that of Olympus, only as Korybantic or proper to Cybele, whereas Alcibiades and Socrates seem to think that only Olympus’ tunes will produce the effect they describe. But we should probably treat this as an exaggeration;

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Antonella Provenza for drawing this passage to my attention.

<sup>2</sup> See Balme-Brown 2001, pp. 241–245, and cfr. Traill 2008, pp. 117–119.

no other evidence suggests that all such music was attributed to Olympus in Plato's time.

Plato's comments identify for us the context in which the melodies attributed to Olympus exercised their power. Alcibiades' word *τελετή* must refer to the rituals of initiation into the mystery cults, and the Menander fragment points plainly in a similar direction. Alcibiades and Socrates seem to be thinking particularly of the introductory phase of these rituals, when the novice was being prepared for initiation; this phase is mentioned also in Plato's *Euthydemus* (277d-e), where the rituals are those of the Korybantes. Alcibiades' suggestion that the music might be played by a *φάυλη αὐλητρίς* may seem strange, since the situation in which we most often hear of such performers is of course the symposium, but we should remember that one of the most prominent festivals of initiation was the Thesmophoria, to which only women were admitted, and those who organised it must have employed female musicians.

In the light of the observations I made earlier in this paper, the answer to my final question now seems obvious. Plato's remarks about Olympus can have no bearing on solemn Dorian pieces such as the *spondeion*, nor on his laments, nor on his Lydian compositions. He must be referring to the Phrygian *aulemata* which Aristotle links specifically with *enthousiasmos*; and although we know that several kinds of composition fell into this category, including the *nomos* of Athena, it seems overwhelmingly likely that he is thinking of one group of pieces in particular. Of all the contexts to which Olympus' music can be attached, only the ceremonies in honour of the Mother Goddess – mentioned also in the Menander fragment – are known to have included initiatory *τελεταί*, whether she was identified with Cybele or with Demeter, as in the Thesmophoria. Probably, then, the *aulemata* that Plato had in mind were the *Metroia*, with their relatively extensive enharmonic scale spanning an octave and a tone, their insistent dancing rhythms, and their reputation for generating a chaotic medley of emotions. They are not given much prominence in the text of the *De musica*, not nearly as much as the *spondeion* and the *spondeiazon tropos* or even the *nomos* of Athena; but the fact that Plato – and probably Aristotle too – could designate them simply as 'the *aulemata* of Olympus' without further specification seems to indicate that it was the *Metroia*, rather than the compositions which Aristoxenus so painstakingly dissects, that Olympus' name would immediately have evoked in that period. Not all archaic-sounding enharmonic music was noble, stately and dignified, and when we think about what I called the 'profile' of the music attributed to Olympus in the fourth century, we should not assume that it was all or even mostly of that sort. I have tried to convey something of its diversity; what I am now suggesting is that its most widely recognised manifestations may have been very far indeed from the severe

austerity of the examples best known to us, and found their place in the ecstatic rituals of the mystery cults.

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